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ABSTRACT

Presented in the paper is the hypothesis that father-daughter incest may be seen as a family maintenance device when the mother abdicates her sexual role and the father turns to his daughter to fulfill his sexual needs rather than going outside the family. Data from subcultures in Sweden, Japan, and America is cited. Female sex role development is described, and the daughter's willingness to participate in the incestuous relationship is seen to be an outgrowth of her sex role conditioning and self-esteem. It is suggested that the incestuous family conforms tc the definition of a subculture. (CL)

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"I Love Daddy"

or

"Role Development as a Function of Incestuous Behavior"

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INCEST

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A. The Family as Sub-culture

"Primal rights" is usually defined as the privilege of the dominant male of a family to have the use of all other members of the family. The concept of primal rights is not limited to the area of sexuality; when used as a rationale for father-daughter incest, however, primal rights essentially means the right of sexual use of the daughter by the father.

The purpose of this paper is to present the hypothesis that father-daughter incest can be viewed as a family maintenance device. When the mother for any number of possible reasons ceases to fulfill her sexual role with the father, he turns to the daughter to fulfill his sexual needs rather than to a woman outside the family.

We will present data from sub-cultures in Japan, Sweden , and America which seem to have used incest in this way. We will then define the incestuous family as a subculture.

We further hypothesize that a daughter's willingness to participate in an incestuous relationship with her father can be viewed as a logical extension of female sex-role development -- the daughter has been taught to be passive, dependent, obedient and helpful, and helps and obeys her father when he wishes to have a sexual relationship with her. Further, her self-esteem is related to her sex-role acceptance. If having a sexual relationship with her

father is an important part of sex-role acceptance within the microculture of the family, then having a sexual relationship with him is also important to the daughter's self-esteem.

SEX ROLE DEVELOPMENT

The development within an individual of their role within society begins at the time of their birth. Children internalize their particular role long before formal education begins (Bernstein, 1972). The games children are allowed to play, the fantasies they are reinforced to entertain, and the chores which they are expected to perform all add cumulatively to their preceived position or function in society. Barry (1968) in a cross-cultural study of parental effects on the sex-role development of children, found that if parental influence is factored out, male and female children would have neither significant physical or psychological differences until puberty. Though this is probably an extreme position, the role of parental influence is critically important.

The general contention in the field of role development indicates that by the time children are four to five years old they have developed a clear concept of their "appropriate" sex role: the female as a nurturer and the male as a provider (Weitzman, 1972: Hurlock, 1959, 1974). Sex-role socialization constitutes a prominent part of a

child's learning experience during these early years. The female is inundated with role models and expectations to be passive and dependent, while the male child is expected and encouraged to be gregarious, adventurous, and a leader.

Once a child enters the formal education process, role development continues. The development of sex roles follows, in school, a virtually institutionalized course. Throughout this period, if either gender tries to experiment with the other's role, they are quickly directed back to their appropriate roles. If the child continues, she/he is "deviant" for particular behaviors and characteristics are considered pathological for one sex but not the other. Both teacher and clinician have been taught that modeling one's self to role expectations is "healthy" (Broverman, 1970; Baruch, 1973). Baruch (1973) found in a study of primary school children that the dominant characteristics the children associated with their own and the opposite sex were in congruence with these stereotypic roles. He found that the top three preferred attributes for females were that they should be: (1) less noisy and dirty than boys, (2) obedient, and (3) helpful. This study also found that males were considered able to: (1) do and (2) be more things. The inculcation of role place and potential seems to be fairly well-developed at this early age.

IMPORTANCE OF ROLE ACCEPTANCE

This stereotypic conditioning continues through the individual's learning experiences and is apparent in overt behaviors of both boys and girls. The person who accepts his or her stereotypic role is more desirable socially to peers, parents, and teachers (Hurlock, 1974; Broverman, 1970). "Acceptance" as based upon desirability is a primary variable in development of self-concept (Rosenkrantz, 1968). In essence, the self concept level of a person is a function of social acceptance, which in turn is dependent on role assumption.

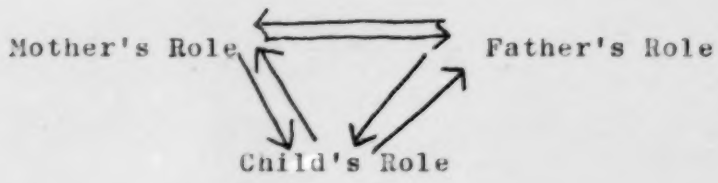
Role Acceptance--→ Social Acceptance--→ Self Acceptance

The relationship of perceived expectations of behavior to applied behavior conceptually applies to the macroculture of an individual (society as a whole) as well as to the microculture (the family unit). Within the microculture of the family, the individual is both internally and externally reinforced for performance of expected behaviors; i.e.: role acceptance. Externally the reinforcement comes from societal approval and internally by fulfillment of the learned role as judged by family maintenance.

The performance of expected sex-role behavior is in essence the outward sign of the subliminal acceptance of the individual's appropriate role. With the acceptance of

this role, the individual may perceive that the maintenance of the family is dependent upon the performance of that role. The maintenance of that family in turn provides the feedback justifying the individual's assumed role.

If the family is to maintain a feedback system supporting the individual roles within it, each member of the family must assume their own role. If one member does not fulfill his/her role, a conflict situation arises, not only in the structure of the family but in the self acceptance of its individual members.



Deutsch (1969) contends that the course of conflict resolution is highly dependent upon the existence of cooperative (versus competitive) bonds linking the conflicting parties. The strength of the cooperative bonds is a function of their importance. These bonds can be "superordinate" goals, mutually facilitating interests, common allegiances and values, and linkages to a common community (p. 27). In the case of the incestuous family, the father, mother, and daughter(s) all need to cooperate in role "rearrangement" and in maintaining the facade of more usual, (in this culture) non-incestuous relationships.

Classical incest usually occurs not long after sexual estrangement between husband and wife (Lester, 1972: Machottia

1967; Bagley, 1969), and usually includes, at the least, passive permission of the mother (Hersko, 1961; Lester, 1972; Cavallin, 1973). The child is usually described as either an active or passive participant, but rarely as rejecting (Lustig, 1966; Hersko, 1961; Cormier, 1962; Cavallin, 1973; Anderson, 1973, Gustaitis, 1974).

CONSIDERATION OF INCEST AS ROLE ACCEPTANCE

Magal and Winnik (1968) state that incest appears to be a factor used to safeguard family unity from disintegration when internal disruption occurs, such as the mother's death, sickness or other reasons for abdication of sex role.

Lustig's (1966) study concurred with this idea by elucidating the concept of incest as a transaction which protects and maintains the family, i.e., the preservation of the family group is the central function of the incestuous family. He states that this argument serves as an adequate defense for the family as long as the members, (especially the mother,) are able to maintain a facade of role competence.

Lustig (1966) discusses the role of incest as a maintenance feature for the structure of the family. Although unable to function in conformance with societal goals and standards, the family functions optimally as an isolated unit. The mother, unable to perform her role,

transfers it to her daughter; both are content with this transference. Incest is utilized to reduce family tension by preventing confrontation with sources of tension. Preservation of the family group is the central function of the incestuous relationship.

EXAMPLES OF USE OF INCEST FOR FAMILY MAINTENANCE

Classical incest (natural father-daughter) can be likened to learned behavior in that it is a manner of functioning used to maintain the family unit. Macrosocieties have utilized incest as a learned method of survival in order to cope with broken links, both physically and cognitively with other social systems. This learned method consists of looking at the resources available within that unit and seeing what factors may help them function at an optimal level.

Several studies have exemplified the utilization of internal resources to maintain societal equilibrium. Riemer (1940), in a study of 58 cases of incest in pre-war agricultural society in Sweden, suggested that father-daughter incest was utilized as a method of maintaining familial equilibrium. Social isolation prevented the patriarch from going outside the nuclear family to compensate for the matriarch's inability to fulfill her sexual role in each of the cases. As a result the father used his daughters to gratify his sexual needs. Family acceptance

of the incestuous relationship occurred as father-daughter involvement was regarded as a means of keeping the micro-society of the family functioning at an optimal level.

The Mormon society formally practiced incest until it was outlawed by the State in 1892. The society had broken ties from other societies due to its unique value system. Incest helped maintain internal socialization and helped increase population of their society at large. As a result of society's disfavor of their behavior, the Mormon society functioned closer together in reaction to their ostracism. Dependency on internal resources increased conversely and proportionally to the amount of external resources received (Schroeder, 1915).

Kubo (1959) cites examples of how the Japanese utilized incest to maintain the family feudal system. Problems within the family structure were settled internally so as to maintain equilibrium and prevent division of property. Incest was used to maintain equilibrium when the mother could no longer function adequately in her role.

In summary, the use of incest has long been a method of maintaining sub-cultures in society at large. Usually the sub-cultures which used incest were socially or physically isolated.

FAMILY AS A SUB-SOCIETY

The family can be considered as a sub-society func-

tioning within a larger society. The same rationale for incest can be applied to individual families as can be for sub-cultures. The difference is that the motivations for incest are less likely to be expressed to and interpreted by the larger society. The family that is dysfunctional **becau**se incest occurs within it is dysfunctional only to the extent that it relies upon itself for maintenance of familial roles and equilibrium rather than external society.

REDEFINITION OF FAMILY AS SOCIETY

Parsons(1954) states that a family cannot be considered a society. He defines a society as a social system having long-term persistence from within its own resources. He notes that since a family must go outside of itself to find marriage partners it cannot be a society.

It is the contention of the authors that since the incestuous family is in fact utilizing its internal resources to perform familial roles then it is a social system, or society. The incestuous family maintains itself as a closed society by the utilization of its own members to fulfill all of the roles necessary for its internal feedback system. When a member of the family does not fulfill an integral aspect of their role assignment, either the role will become redefined or the role performance will have to be performed by another member of that family unit. If the role becomes redefined, the equilibrium of the family

as an ecosystem will shift, for the feedback given and received by each member of the family will also need to be redefined.

In the incestuous family the role definitions do not change, but rather extend to other family members, thereby maintaining all role functions within the original nucleus. The internal role adjustments that do occur are usually the direct assumption of abdicated roles of other members. Incestual behavior, then, must be defined as a total function, or system of role relationships between mother, father, and daughter.

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